Challenges and Opportunities
Saskatchewan

Helping You and Your Family
March, 1989

The Hon. J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance
Budget, 1989-90

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Honourable J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance

This Progressive Conservative Government believes in Saskatchewan's future. By working with the people of this Province, we can undertake exciting new initiatives to make the future our own.

The 1989-90 Budget Address highlights many of the innovative measures that this Government will undertake in the coming year. These new initiatives will position Saskatchewan people to take up the challenges and opportunities presented by a world economy in transition.

This budget document provides the details of these initiatives. It demonstrates our determination to address the needs and aspirations of the Saskatchewan people. It demonstrates our commitment to take a comprehensive, coordinated approach to the development of the Province. It acknowledges the interdependent nature of our rural and urban communities and demonstrates our firm conviction that Saskatchewan must be seen as more than simply the sum of its parts.

The people of Saskatchewan are working together to build on their accomplishments. The initiatives described in this document enable us to build the foundation for a better tomorrow.

Hon. J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister of Finance

Helping You and Your Family

Introduction

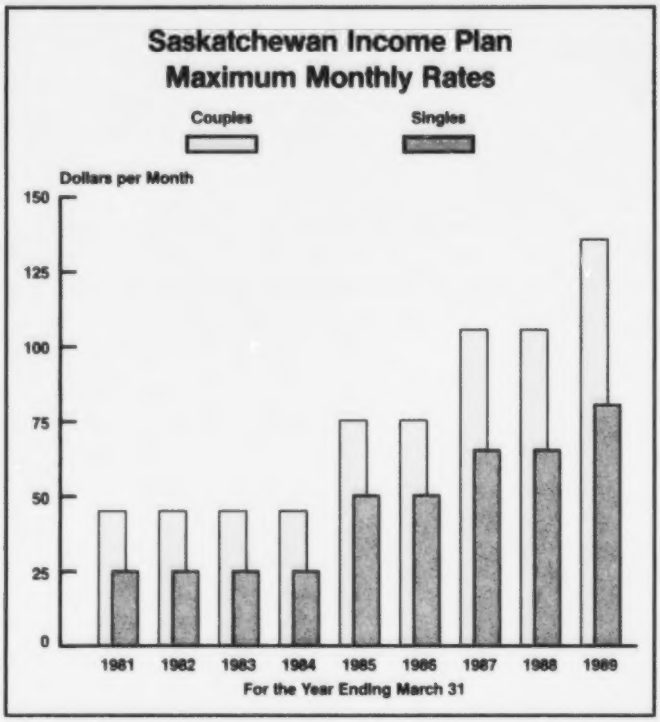
The family is the foundation upon which our society is built. Rapid advancement of technology and communications has led to changes in the family and society.

Today's families have more varied structures and much different needs than the families of three decades ago. Today, both spouses often work outside the home. The average family size is smaller. Single parent families are more prevalent. Seniors are living longer, healthier and more independent lives than before.

This Government has consistently responded to the many and diverse needs of families.

- Our mortgage protection plans were introduced to provide families with long-term protection against rising interest rates. These programs enabled many young Saskatchewan families to keep their homes. Over 44,000 families have received $75 million and benefited from the financial security these programs provide.
- The Saskatchewan Pension Plan enables homemakers, the self-employed and part-time workers to contribute to their own retirement security. Previously, many of these individuals, especially homemakers, did not have the opportunity to participate in a pension program. The Plan, the first of its kind in North America, now has over 47,000 members, of whom 80 per cent are women and 40 per cent are homemakers.
- The Saskatchewan Home Improvement Program offers matching grants and low interest loans to help families repair and upgrade their homes. This Program has resulted in over 20,000 jobs and has benefited over 150,000 families to date.
- The Seniors' Heritage Program has provided over $110 million in assistance to seniors since 1986. The Saskatchewan Income Plan supplements income for seniors in need. Since 1981, the maximum monthly rates have increased from $25 to $80 (220 per cent) for singles and from $45 to $135 (200 per cent) for couples. These two Programs have enabled many low income seniors to remain in their homes and maintain their independence.
- In 1987, this Government enhanced the Saskatchewan Tax Reduction to provide greater support for Saskatchewan families, particularly single parent families and seniors. Over 330,000 people benefit from this income tax reduction annually.
- Exemptions to the Education and Health Tax for essential goods such as most clothing and footwear, and electricity for homes and farms provide Saskatchewan families with over $58 million in benefits each year.

In addition, this Government has expanded the Special Care Home Program and increased assistance received under the Family Income Program.



Providing support to the family is a special challenge. Governments must be helpful, not intrusive. The Government must be particularly supportive when families are facing more difficult challenges such as high interest rates, illness, family violence or substance abuse. Individuals, families and children should be supported in finding their own solutions to problems they may encounter.

This Government has developed a three-part approach to family policy:

- positive family development;
- support for family life; and,
- opportunities for the disadvantaged.

Saskatchewan's policies and programs have been built around the basic principle of people and communities building together. This approach reflects the unique nature of our communities, our society and our heritage.

Positive Family Development

This Government recognizes that a supportive family lifestyle is important to the well-being of all Saskatchewan families.

National Symposium About Families

This Province is demonstrating its commitment to the family by hosting the first National Symposium About Families in July of this year. Other governments, as well as major national and community agencies, will participate.

The objective of this Symposium will be to establish policy and program directions that will carry Saskatchewan into the 1990s and beyond. The expression of diverse viewpoints will be encouraged to allow a wide range of policy and program ideas to emerge. Input is being sought from a variety of people and organizations interested in family policy, both nationally and provincially.

Adoption

Bringing families together through adoption, while keeping connections with the birth family, has been encouraged through:

- new open adoption projects that give more options to the birth parents and adoptive parents;
- special adoption and assisted adoption services that locate homes for children who might not otherwise have the opportunity for family life; and,
- post adoption services that reunite adult adoptees with members of their birth families.

This year, the Government will introduce new legislation to clarify adoption alternatives and to increase choices available to both adoptive and birth parents.

Foster Care

Foster parents provide a supportive family environment for children whose parents are temporarily unable to provide for them. They also play an important role in assisting children to reunite with their families.

In Saskatchewan, innovative approaches have ensured the stability and continuity of our foster care system.

Foster parents and government are working together in this Province to make foster care better. This cooperative approach is fundamental to the success of reuniting families and allows community members to be involved in helping families and children in difficulty.

Last year, the Government introduced a fee schedule that recognized the differences in both the level of care provided and the expertise of the caregivers. This initiative provided an additional $625,000 to foster care families.

An extensive training program, which focuses on parenting skills and provides more involvement with the natural family, has been introduced.

In 1989, a new program will be developed to allow the placement of a child with members of the extended family. In addition, this Budget provides for further increases in foster care rates.

Child Care

This year is the first year of the **Child Care Development Plan. When the Plan is complete in 1995, almost 12,000 child care spaces will be available. This represents a tripling of child care spaces since 1980. Over 1,000 new child care spaces will be added in this year.**

In rural areas where there are seasonal demands for more temporary or part-time spaces, the provision of child care is a particular challenge. This Plan supports innovation in rural child care, infant care and respite care for foster children. **By 1995, 2,000 of the new child care spaces will be in rural Saskatchewan.**

The Child Care Development Plan will allow new licensed spaces to be opened without government funding. At the same time, this Government recognizes the need to provide support for lower income working families who need child care.

This year, a total of $16.5 million, a $3.0 million or 23 per cent increase, will be provided for child care in Saskatchewan. Funding to child care centres will more than double from $1.5 million to $3.2 million and child care subsidies paid on behalf of parents will increase by $1.3 million.

The Farm Family

The farm family is integral to the social fabric of Saskatchewan and is the economic base for most of Saskatchewan's communities.

The farm family often spends more time together working on common goals. Farm families have made this Province what it is today.

This Government has always recognized the importance of farm families and has taken steps to ensure their continued success. These steps include:

- the Farm Purchase Program, to protect against high interest rates;
- the Production Loan Program and Counselling and Assistance for Farmers Program, to respond to farm cashflow needs;
- the Farm Land Security Board (FLSB), to provide farm families facing financial difficulty with a fair review of their financial status; and,
- The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act, to protect the home quarter from foreclosure.

This year, the mandate of the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan will be extended to allow lending for capital items for all primary agricultural operations. New and developing farmers can now receive financing for the home quarter plus necessary farm-related improvements.

To further complement this initiative, the Vendor Mortgage Guarantee Program will be introduced. This will encourage retiring farmers to continue to invest in agriculture while at the same time providing beginning farmers an alternative to borrowing from financial institutions.

These initiatives will provide long-term stability for the farm family and help ensure the well-being of our rural communities.

In addition to financial security, farm safety is important to farm families. **To encourage safety on the farm, this Government has:**

- introduced the Farm Safety Program to promote health and safety in the agricultural sector; and,
- provided additional funding for a Centre of Agricultural Medicine in Saskatoon to focus on the study of farm-related diseases.

Families Matter

Last year, the Families Matter program was introduced to promote the value of supportive relationships while assisting with the delivery of a variety of services that enrich family life. This program includes:

- development of community and volunteer activities;
- support for parents and families through parenting seminars and courses; and,
- promotion of greater awareness of the value of family life, healthy relationships and positive parenting.

This year, almost $700,000 in new funding will be provided to open two Family Support Centres. These multi-service, storefront facilities will include:

- parent education and child development training;
- accommodation for victims of family violence;
- outreach and crisis intervention; and,
- family treatment and counselling.

The average family is no longer the traditional family of four. As other family arrangements become more common in society, government programs must respond to the changing needs of the family.

Single Parents

In the past, many people who were legally obliged to make maintenance and child support payments failed to fulfill this responsibility. In 1986, this Government introduced the Automatic Enforcement of Maintenance Orders (AEMO) Program to help address this problem. Since that time, over 5,500 people have registered with the AEMO Program.

Last year, this Program directly assisted in the recovery of over $3.3 million in court-ordered payments. In this Budget, over $600,000 will be provided to continue efforts to pursue maintenance payments and assist single parents in gaining financial independence.

In addition, over $500,000 in new funding will be provided to help individuals prepare for court appearances to obtain maintenance orders. Para-legal services to trace absent parents, interview clients and prepare supporting documents will be established.

This Government is also expanding the array of financial, vocational and family support programs available to single parents on social assistance. To respond to their needs, new services will:

- provide support to teenage mothers in the areas of child development, parenting instruction, and education and employment;
- develop a job search and life skills program for single parents;
- provide in-home vocational planning guides to assist single parents in working toward financial independence;

- provide special emphasis in the Saskatchewan Works and the Saskatchewan Skills Development Programs to respond to individual employment and training needs;
- ensure that supplementary health benefits are continued for eligible clients leaving social assistance; and,
- provide child care spaces on a preferential basis to single parents participating in training and employment programs.

These services, in conjunction with existing programs, will provide support for single parents in achieving financial independence.

Family Law Reform

Family breakdown is often traumatic. In the face of this trauma, the legal system must be a positive force in addressing the families' needs.

In 1989, new legislation will be introduced to clarify and update the law relating to child custody, access, guardianship and the status of children, and the law relating to maintenance of children and spouses. This legislation will encourage mediation and out of court settlements, as well as make the law easier to enforce and understand.

Support for Family Life

Stress in society manifests itself in many forms. There are times when governments must protect, as well as support, individuals and the family.

Child Protection

Children are the Province's most precious resource. This Government takes a special interest in the welfare of Saskatchewan children.

In 1989, new child welfare legislation will be introduced to support the family and broaden the opportunity for community involvement in cases where child protection is necessary.

This approach will provide in-home support and placement with members of the child's extended family as an alternative to foster care. **The legislation will pursue the least intrusive and most effective service to the family by:**

- providing a first-line response to support families rather than automatically remove children;
- seeking support from the extended family and, in the case of Treaty Indian children, from their Indian Band; and,
- using family review panels composed of community members to resolve conflicts and prevent cases from going to court unnecessarily.

Family Violence

The reality of family violence is a tragedy. Spousal abuse, child abuse (often sexual abuse) and abuse of the elderly are causes of great concern.

The challenge facing society is the elimination of family violence. Saskatchewan has responded with a variety of services, such as:

- mobile crisis units in major centres that deliver front-line emergency response;
- training through our regional college system for police, health care professionals and others who deal with family violence; and,
- procedures for teachers and hospital staff to initiate investigation of suspected family violence.

In addition, the Government has developed new ways to assist victims of child abuse. Pilot projects are under way which will provide:

- interview facilities for child witnesses;
- protocols for video-taping children's evidence;
- specialized training to police officers in interview techniques; and,
- separation of child witnesses from accused persons in the courtroom.

These measures will do much to reduce the trauma associated with investigation and court appearances.

The Government is building an integrated response to family violence that is supportive and less disruptive to families while still providing shelter when needed. This includes:

- outreach teams working at family homes to help sort through issues so that situations do not reach the crisis stage;
- support services such as individual and group treatment programs in rural areas; and,
- options to remove the abuser, rather than the abused, from the home.

The Family Support Centres, described above, will complement these initiatives. **Two additional pilot projects specifically address child sexual abuse.**

- A program for integrated family treatment will provide family therapy where children have been sexually abused in the home.
- A new program for the treatment of adolescent sexual offenders will be introduced by building on existing expertise in the mental health field.

Since 1982, the number of agencies providing services to victims of family violence has doubled to 24, including 4 new rural crisis counselling agencies. Funding to these organizations will have more than doubled to over $3.0 million in 1989-90.

Substance Abuse

Saskatchewan families must deal with the growing problem of substance abuse. This requires efforts in both the prevention of substance abuse and the treatment of abusers. This Government has actively supported treatment and rehabilitation.

Since 1982, funding to the Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (SADAC) has tripled. Funds have been provided for:

- the development of Whitespruce, a unique facility designed solely for the treatment of young victims of substance abuse;
- the expansion of community services for adults and youth in all regions of the Province;
- the upgrading of Calder Centre in Saskatoon, a facility for the treatment of adult victims of substance abuse; and,
- community organizations to attract and retain qualified staff.

SADAC also provides a range of services designed to help adults who are victims of substance abuse. These include in-patient treatment, half-way houses, support for family members, and education and awareness programs for both professionals and the general public.

This Budget will provide an additional $1.0 million for a new initiative to prevent substance abuse. A provincial advisory committee led by SADAC will be established to coordinate the efforts of government agencies, the private sector, community groups and police forces in the fight against substance abuse. Funding will be provided to:

- increase enforcement of drug laws through coordinated efforts by police forces, the crime prevention community and school resource officers;
- develop a drug awareness program for use in our schools;
- establish outreach services for street youth; and,
- expand treatment and counselling services for youth in custody and families in crisis.

The fight against substance abuse needs the support of everyone in the Province. Society must be tough on suppliers, while showing compassion and understanding towards victims. Society must help its members to understand the dangers, both physical and criminal, of taking drugs.

Young Offenders

Introduction of a provincial Young Offenders Program Act, complementing existing federal legislation, will provide a range of community-based and institutional programs for young offenders. In addition, it will strengthen educational and preventive services to best help these young people who are in conflict with the law.

This year, nearly $500,000 will be provided to enhance community-based programming for young offenders. Saskatchewan's youth must be given the support and direction they need to resolve their problems and develop into productive members of society.

Protection for the Wage Earner

In 1989, support to all Saskatchewan families will be further demonstrated by:

- initiating pension reform including improved survivor benefits;
- a major review of existing Occupational Health and Safety legislation; and,
- a new Employment Benefits Act to improve parental leave provisions and benefits for part-time employees.

This Government will continue to provide programs and services to improve the quality of life for families in Saskatchewan.

Opportunities for Disadvantaged Families

In addition to the support provided by the various service programs offered by government, at times, some families may need financial assistance.

Welfare Reform

Social assistance programs are an integral part of this support.

In 1984, this Government implemented a multi-year program of Welfare Reform. **The objectives of Welfare Reform were four-fold:**

- to provide alternatives to welfare through employment and training opportunities;
- to bring greater fairness, simplicity, and equity to the financial benefit structure;
- to improve program management and delivery; and,
- to ensure that benefits are provided only to those who are truly in need of assistance.

Since 1984, significant progress has been made and Welfare Reform continues to be a key priority. **Welfare Reform has provided many with the dignity of employment and self-sufficiency.**

- Over 10,000 participants have received skills training and employment from the Saskatchewan Works Program;
- Over 1,000 individuals have received training and practical work experience through the New Careers Corporation on projects such as the Canada Games Boathouse and Promenade in Saskatoon; and,
- hundreds of individuals have been trained in forestry jobs by Par Industries in Prince Albert.

Today, because of these efforts, there are over 2,000 fewer people requiring social assistance than in 1984.

Basic Benefits

In 1984, basic social assistance benefits were restructured to ensure greater fairness. At the same time, funds were provided for employment and training programs.

In 1987, this initiative was enhanced by:

- further simplification of the benefit structure;
- introduction of new earnings exemptions and standardized allowances to ensure fairness across the Province; and,
- an increase in the basic allowance.

In 1989-90, room and board rates for adults will be adjusted. This adjustment is part of a longer term strategy to ensure that rates for different living arrangements are equitable. Maximum housing allowances will increase for families in major centres in recognition of the additional costs of urban living.

This Government's commitment to families is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the maximum assistance rates for families are among the highest in Canada.

Employment and Training

Since provincial employment and training programs aimed specifically at social assistance recipients were introduced, more than 10,000 people have received practical, on-the-job work experience. Over 12,000 have enrolled in training programs.

Saskatchewan initiatives to provide employment alternatives through joint federal and provincial cooperation are being followed across the country.

This Budget includes funding for a new work and training incentives package which includes:

- increased training allowances;
- extended training allowances, to cover job search costs for up to three months for clients who complete training and are actively looking for work; and,
- increased maximum earned income exemptions.

In addition to these changes, a special benefits package will be introduced to ease the transition from welfare back into the workforce and to recognize some of the costs of starting a job such as the purchase of clothing.

These initiatives will ensure that people do not have additional barriers to overcome in order to gain independence from welfare.

These and other efforts, such as cheque pick-up, in-home visits, computerized reporting systems, new audit procedures and joint payment cheques for the rent portion of benefits, have resulted in savings of nearly $90 million since Welfare Reform was introduced in 1984. These savings have been used to help those in need.

Community Living

This Government recognizes the potential of many disabled individuals to participate actively in their communities.

Living within the community provides the mentally disabled with greater opportunity to become more independent. Over 180 individuals who previously resided at North Park Centre, in Prince Albert, and at Valley View Centre, in Moose Jaw, have moved into a community setting with the support of expanded community services and the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living.

This year, opportunities to move into a community residential setting will be made available to approximately 80 residents of Valley View Centre.

This Government has also actively supported other initiatives to help disabled people live more independently. **Two examples of this support are the new regulations on building accessibility and SaskTel's program to provide special telephone equipment to the hearing impaired.**

In conjunction with the Government, the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC) has provided over 100 jobs for disabled persons in 37 communities across the Province in the recycling of aluminum cans. In addition to creating jobs, SARCAN Recycling Inc. depots are serving as training facilities for other disabled clients.

This Government will further demonstrate its support by introducing legislation to protect the mentally disabled from discrimination.

Conclusion

This Government recognizes that the family is the social and economic foundation of this Province.

Programs and services are in place which support the family. This support recognizes the ability of individuals and families to find their own solutions to problems.

This Government will continue its efforts to assist Saskatchewan families to meet the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities of the future.